

WORKING FOR OUR COMMUNITY



Wilcox Tech
A budget-related bill passed during our special session in October included school construction funding for ongoing work at the Meriden’s Wilcox Technical High School. Slightly more than \$60 million was approved for the next phase of construction. This is for local students, who will benefit from a rewarding educational experience. Meriden’s local economy will also benefit from hundreds of construction jobs that will be created.

Champion of Youth

I was very honored to be named the 2009 ‘Champion of Youth’ by the Connecticut Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs. I welcomed Don Maletto, Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Meriden, and scores of Boys and Girls Club members and officials from across the state to the Capitol.



Meriden Hub Property

State funding was approved last month for additional engineering studies and formal planning for the site of the former Meriden Hub shopping mall. The project started with a \$2 million state grant I helped to secure in 2004—this \$600,000 represents the balance of that original grant. The project will reclaim approximately 15 acres in the heart of the city. Meriden’s economic future hinges on a strong partnership between government and the private sector. This grant represents progress toward transforming the city’s central business area.



Helping Connecticut’s Farmers

Much of Connecticut’s farmland and open space is in jeopardy of being paved over, threatening the state’s farming industry and quality of life. This year we passed a new law that helps the state permanently protect 1,300 acres of farmland across Connecticut. Thanks to the new law, farmers will have greater certainty that the land they depend on will remain farmland. Dairy farmers throughout Connecticut and across the country are being hit extremely hard by these tough financial times. Many are on the brink of bankruptcy. The General Assembly approved \$10 million of emergency assistance to help keep these farmers working.



Dear Neighbor,

Our economy is just starting to show some positive signs after enduring the worst period since the Great Depression. People lost their jobs and some even lost their homes. At the same time, the state’s budget deficit reached a record high of \$8.5 billion.

Our challenge this past legislative session was to make very difficult budget cuts and, at the same time, preserve important programs that are key to Connecticut’s long-term viability. Uppermost in my mind was to protect working families and middle-class folks who are struggling to survive the recession.

We passed a budget that makes an historic \$3 billion in cuts yet protects funding for education, public safety and avoids across-the-board tax increases. I’m also pleased that we passed laws that will help small businesses, families caring for autistic children and which enact strict rules on credit card marketing on college campuses.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tom Gaffey
State Senator

Stay Informed in a “Green” Way

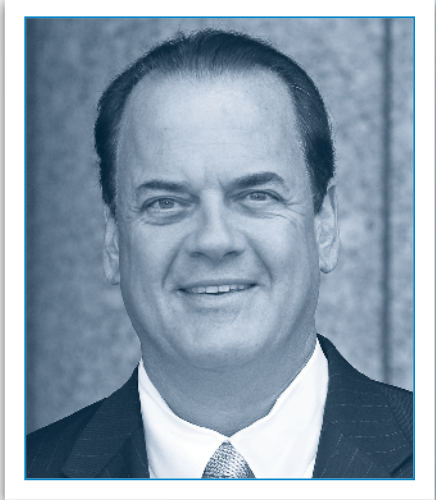
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State Senator
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Fighting for a Fair Budget

In September, the General Assembly and Governor Rell agreed on a budget for the next two years. The compromise budget includes more than \$3 billion in spending cuts, the largest reduction in state history. We did it by cutting costs in every agency and all parts of government.

At the same time, we were able to protect middle-class families, the elderly, children and the poor from devastating cuts to critical services. Democrats also made the tax code fairer for by raising revenues from joint filers making more than \$1 million a year. The budget will help stabilize Connecticut's economy and help families survive this difficult time.

I fought to preserve funding for several important programs and services:



- ▶ **The LIFE STAR medical helicopter** has helped save lives in every town and city in Connecticut. It is an especially vital service for those in rural parts of the state.
- ▶ **Higher education scholarships** help students and their parents afford college. A recession is the worst time to reduce scholarships and financial aid.
- ▶ **Public libraries** add so much to our towns and cities. Across-the-board cuts, as some proposed, would have hit them hard.
- ▶ **School-based health centers** help protect children from epidemics, such as the flu. Deep cuts to these centers would have undermined public health.

State Savings on Prescription Drugs

The State of Connecticut spends hundreds of millions of dollars on prescription drugs for senior citizens, those with disabilities, low-income families with children and state employees and retirees. Currently, the state has no process by which we can ensure that the drugs are being purchased at the most cost-effective rate. So, the General Assembly passed a law that requires the state to develop a plan for the bulk purchasing of pharmaceuticals. Developing and implementing such a plan will ensure that state taxpayer dollars are being spent efficiently on prescription drugs.



Cracking Down on Credit Card Companies

For years, credit card companies have solicited students on college campuses. As a result, more and more college students face insurmountable credit card debt. Parents also find themselves responsible for their children's debt. That's why I sponsored a new law putting restrictions on the issuance and marketing of credit cards on public college campuses. Colleges will be prohibited from selling lists of their students to credit card companies. Credit card companies will now be prohibited from marketing during sporting events and during certain times of the year such as orientation days. This law forbids credit card companies from automatically taking debt collection action against a student's parent. All told, it is a dramatic step toward preventing youth from incurring debt before they start their professional careers.



Health Insurance for Autism

Help is on the way for the thousands of families in Connecticut with children who suffer from autism spectrum disorders. The General Assembly approved groundbreaking legislation that made Connecticut the tenth state in the nation to mandate comprehensive health insurance coverage for autism. It requires certain health insurance policies to cover the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, including behavioral therapy for a child age 14 or younger and certain prescription drugs and psychiatric and psychological services. This will improve treatment for children with autism and provide a substantial savings in medical costs for their families.

At-Home Care for the Elderly

Many senior citizens in Connecticut will soon have increased access to personal, non-medical care due to the enactment of a new law I supported. Qualifying seniors can receive financial aid for in-home personal care assistants to help with such things as bathing, dressing and meal preparation. This approach is more desirable for seniors and more cost-effective for the state. It allows elderly residents to hire their preferred assistants without using a home health care agency.

Small Businesses: The Backbone of Connecticut's Economy

This past legislative session we took important steps to help protect small businesses and their workers from the recession.

A recession is the wrong time to eliminate state support for small businesses. That's why we opposed efforts to shut down business incubators, economic assistance grants and supply-chain initiatives—all of which help businesses boost productivity and grow jobs.



Addressing the Teacher Shortage

Connecticut faces a teacher shortage in the near future, and if nothing is done, students could face the fallout. This year the legislature took action by modernizing the teacher certification process and streamlining the way qualified teachers in other states can be eligible to teach here. Additionally,



we expanded the alternative route to certification for those who have worked in other professions and seek to become teachers. This law will also give greater access to the Teach for America program—encouraging new college graduates to teach in challenging school districts.

Helping Families on the Brink of Foreclosure

The housing market crash has had a devastating effect on our state and national economies. Connecticut has been a leader in its effort to keep people in their homes and stabilize property values for all homeowners. We built on that success this year by expanding two important mortgage assistance programs. A new law now requires banks and homeowners to work together to explore options before any foreclosure takes place. The law also improves regulation of mortgage professionals and expands the banking commissioner's enforcement and investigative authority.